



## ICB COMMUNITY FORUM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

April 6, 2006

1. We are a very small school teaching County students the Greek language (both Ancient and Modern). Currently, we rent 5 classrooms each Tuesday and Thursday at Winston Churchill Public School. This is our 5th year there. Recently, we started receiving complaints regarding the condition of the Rooms or for missing items.

How can we avoid this? The classrooms remain unlocked when we depart at 6:30pm and we don't know what was in the classrooms when we come to Churchill at 4:30pm. In other words, if something has been stolen between 2:15 pm (when school ends) and 4:30 pm neither the Teacher nor us would know it. Likewise, if something is taken from the classroom in between 6:30pm and 7:00am the next day no one would know -- but we'll be blamed for it. Is there a solution?

--George Philipopoulos  
Hellenic School

Answer: *There are several things that can be done to help address these sorts of situations. First, looking at the scheduling for Churchill, there doesn't appear to be any use of these rooms prior to this group, so the user might ask the worker to inspect the room as they enter it. In addition, before leaving, ask the building worker to inspect the room and lock the door. This process will not always exempt the group from being cited for any potentially 'stolen' items, as there is no way a worker can know what was there prior to the use or inventory everything in the room after use, but it will address whether or not the room is being left in the manner in which it was found. Also, by ensuring the worker is locking the door after use, anyone outside the user group who might be simply coming in to pilfer will find the door locked.*

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2. Are there any plans to allow permitting fields for daytime in the summer during an earlier window? I understand there may be some schools where it is unknown whether there will be renovations, etc. but wouldn't that info be available for most schools prior to December? Camps need to be able to schedule their sites earlier. Thanks.

--Margaret Bruno  
Affiliation not given

Answer: *Information about summer construction first appears in January, together with information about MCPS summer programs. However, all of this is subject to change right up until the end of the academic year, so that even if information was available earlier, it does not necessarily follow that scheduling of camps would be more expedient. As it is, camps are booked beginning in February and still there are any number of complications that must be resolved as the summer construction schedule is fine-tuned, as computer updates at the schools are scheduled, and as MCPS adds and deletes summer programs. It already occurs that camps scheduled for location "X" then need to be moved to location "Y", as things change. By scheduling earlier, this would likely increase. Were most camps only using fields, then the issue might be less extensive, but the reality is that many camps also use indoor space, if only restrooms and for rain dates, both of which are greatly impacted by MCPS summer construction.*

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3. I'm a weekend user and have been for many years. My question concerns the three-hour minimum for weekend use. I can understand where the minimum needs to be charged if there is only one group in the school as the expenses are fixed in terms of building staff etc., but if the building is being used by two or more groups, a two-hour rental should be allowed. We rent the gym for basketball and our average age is late 40's. Two hours is plenty, so paying an additional \$22 every week for an additional hour is just a waste. I suspect the reply will be, "What if the second group cancels?" That is extremely unlikely and a moot point anyway if cancellation occurs within fourteen days of the start day given the penalty of 100% of the facility charge. Even with 30 days' notice there is still a fee of 50% plus \$25, which I'm sure is more than enough to cover the fixed costs. There could be an agreement that if the second group cancels more than 30 days ahead and a replacement group can't be found, then the remaining group would be charged for three hours. I'm sure this situation would occur so infrequently that it would take very little time to administer. It's never happened in the several years that we have shared the facility we rent.

--Bruce Werber  
Werber and Associates

**Answer:** *The three-hour minimum is not a universally popular operating procedure, but one that is necessary nonetheless. MCPS workers are guaranteed a three-hour minimum compensation for weekend and holiday work. While Mr. Werber has not experienced cancellations by other groups that would have impacted this, the fact is that it happens more often than he might expect. The only way for CUPF to ensure the three-hour minimum is met is to ensure all users book for that amount of time. It is correct that if groups always afforded us appropriate notice of cancellation, it would be feasible to either plug in another group or to go back to the remaining group and then impose a three-hour minimum, but there are two issues here. First, gym users typically do not cancel well in advance, as do those using auditoriums or conducting large-scale events. Gym users tend to cancel the date of the event, a day or two before, or many times simply don't show up without alerting CUPF. The other issue is one of equity and that relates to who would and who would not pay the three-hour minimum if his suggestion was adopted. Assuming there are three groups in a school and one cancels, and that the other two have booked an hour each, who does CUPF assess for the extra hour? The other reality is that given the extensive volume of gym rentals, administering additions to rentals proximate to the day of the rental or after the fact would be extremely cumbersome both for CUPF staff and for Building Staff, who then would not know what groups are expected and for how long, given that they print this information out a day or two in advance, especially for weekend use.*

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4. It appears that the Montgomery County Recreation Department has entered into contract(s) with youth sports organizations, and is using these contractors to run some of their sports programs. These are organizations that have in the past had to apply to CUPF for field and/or gym/room space to run their own similar sports programs. The facility/field rental is then obtained by the Recreation Department on behalf of their contractor, and thus there is a priority given to that program versus if the contractor had to submit a request for the space on their own.

My question is, has the amount of time being requested by the Recreation Department to run their programs increased as a result of this contracting approach, thereby decreasing the amount of facility times available to other non-profit youth sports organizations, such as an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) sports group/club for say track or basketball practices? Thanks.

--Andy Stadnik  
Affiliation not known

**Answer:** *The Recreation Department has long offered part of its program via contractors. When Rec submits contractor programs as part of their overall request, then these programs do get the same priority as any REC program. It is our understanding that if their programs were not conducted by contractors they would be conducted by Department staff, but the amount of time needed to conduct these activities is the*

*same either way. Recreation's request for time has been reasonably consistent over the past several years, but of course, like any other group or league, if they expand programs, or the number of teams requiring space, then the amount of time requested increases too. Certainly, giving mandated priority to Child Care providers, Department of Recreation, PTA, etc., impacts time available for other users, but the real issue is that requests for gym time among all users are extensive. To date, CUPF has been able to reasonably accommodate nearly all groups flexible with regard to location, day and time requested.*

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5. I would like to ask the ICB to consider the situation that I and many elementary school arts specialists find ourselves in - our classrooms are often used for ICB scheduled after-school activities, and that means that they are not available for our own work. This means that whenever there is karate, or scouts, or chess, etc., we can not clean up from the day, get our classrooms and materials set for the next day, or do any kind of planning with our own resources. We have been told that the classrooms are not "ours", but we still need to work in them to be successful as educators, and to take full advantage of our contracted planning time. Imagine the Brownies coming to meet in your office at 3 one day, and the chess club another, and you will have an idea what I mean. Though the problem is not as severe for me this year as in the past (I only have karate), it remains a problem for the art teacher, and for others around the county. Perhaps there could be a way to limit these bookings, so that each teacher has only one day a week when they are dislocated. Thank you,

--Leslie Barr, Music Teacher  
Ashburton ES

**Answer:** *As public facilities, classrooms are made available for responsible community use.*

- *CUPF only schedules classroom use one hour after the end of the school day.*
- *Anything earlier is with approval of principal (such as scouts, PTA programs, etc.).*
- *Groups holding weekday sessions often need use of blackboards and seats, provided in classrooms.*
- *Principals often rotate the use of classrooms to "spread the use" from year to year.*
- *The actual rooms assigned to users by CUPF are determined by the Principal of the school in the order in which they are listed.*
- *The designated school scheduler can always view a shared database that shows what community use is scheduled each day.*

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6. I am the referee assignor and the field coordinator for Washington International Soccer League (adult soccer). WISL has been in existence for about 28 years and has used soccer fields in Montgomery County plus other counties in the Washington, DC area to play. Our league is owned and commissioned by Honorable Judge Chip Terrill and with the efforts of him and other league officials such as myself, we have a disciplined and well organized league in the East Coast and maybe in the Nation. At all times, attendance at our games consists of solely the players and a very few friends, no more than three or four plus game officials. All the players and their friends leave the field right after the game at all times. Due to our high-level referees and games, we need to have at least three games in a row on a given soccer field. Since each game lasts two hours, we need at least six hours instead of four hours on any given day when we have a

permit to use the field. I understand the Montgomery County policy is to rent out the fields for only four hours, but due to the above explanation, we at WISL are requesting to extend the policy to six hours so we can use the soccer fields for the enjoyment of our talented and eager to play soccer players. Thanks.

--Hossein Rasouli  
Washington International Soccer League

**Answer:** *The demand for full size soccer fields is way beyond their availability.*

- *Aside from the high school fields, which we do not permit, and assuming the fields are not being permitted for other uses such as baseball or lacrosse, there are only about 30 fields countywide suitable for the purpose cited.*
- *In addition, many of these fields may, or may not have goals, which would impact the extent of use.*
- *CUPF is responsible for accommodating as many users as possible and makes every effort to balance the needs of youth and adults.*
- *We appreciate the high level of play in your group. However, experience has shown that some adult games on weekends may tend to attract large crowds which could lead to issues of parking, trash, alcohol consumption, smoking and possibly the need for security.*
- *Policies must apply to all groups in a particular category. CUPF is responsible for fair implementation.*

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7. I represent many badminton groups within this county such as Badminton4us, Yeping's badminton club, and MCBF (Montgomery County Badminton Family). 1) Is it possible to post all the school gyms' up-to-date availability online? So we can find out which school's gym is still available for rent; and 2) Is it possible to request more schools to paint badminton lines on their big gyms? Right now only Whitman High, Quince Orchard High, Churchill High, and Northwest High have badminton courts (Magruder and Blair only in their small gyms). The badminton player population is growing in this county, and we have very good young players, among them, one is selected to the National Elite squad (future Olympic training squad). It's very hard for those young badminton players to find a school gym to in which to train, especially during other indoor sports seasons. Please consider our needs so we can have more choices in renting school gyms.

--Chih Chow  
MC Badminton Family

**Answer:** *1) Beginning with the 2005 summer window, CUPF did post remaining gym time on-line. What we found was that availability changes not just daily, but by the hour. There is no staff person who we can 'dedicate' to continually update the list of availability, so that even though we made every effort to update it weekly, it was still often out of date. This led to groups requesting time that appeared on-line, but that was no longer available. We will continue to post remaining gym time on-line, but users must understand that it is not an 'up to the minute' thing, and that even information posted on-line becomes old very quickly.*

*2) We suspect that although Badminton may be experiencing a resurgence of sorts with some users, it is still not a sport that most high schools, with limited dollars to expend on upgrading their athletic areas, will elect to pursue. We will certainly forward your interest to MCPS Director of Athletics, for his information. Ultimately, MCPS decides how to allocate funds for athletic expansion. The ICB can certainly consider whether or not to earmark any dollars flowing from this office to MCPS for addition of badminton courts,*

*keeping in mind however that most dollars flowing from the ICB to MCPS are not earmarked by the ICB, and MCPS determines how those dollars are to be allocated.*

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8. I am the coordinator for the Rockville Sail and Power Squadron of our boating safety course, "Boat Smart," which we have taught for many years at night in Rockville-area high schools. The certificate that is awarded to students at the successful completion of a proctored exam is one mandated by the State of Maryland (and other jurisdictions) and required to be carried when operating a boat on Maryland waters. Our instructors are experienced boaters, are certified under NASBLA, are volunteers, our organization is a not-for-profit group, and the program is very successful. About half of our participants learn about the program through the web site of our national organization and about half of the participants learn about the program through the Adult Education brochure that used to be published, and which has apparently been discontinued. I have spoken with the Recreation Department of Montgomery County and it appears that Recreation has not picked up any of the boating safety classes or the advertising (i.e., publishing the Adult Education brochure with the courses and their schedules) of such classes.

With the changes in the offing as of June 1, 2006, I have two questions: (1) Has there been any change in terms of forms, fees, procedures, etc. with respect to our organization continuing to use a classroom in a public high school to conduct a volunteer-run boating safety course? (2) Because Montgomery County Public Schools, Department of Alternative Programs, no longer publishes a course schedule, which organization will pick up the advertising? We would like to organize our fall schedule as soon as possible although we can appreciate that the situation is fluid. Thank you.

--Charles Yost,

Rockville Sail and Power Squadron

Answer:

- 98% of our users are non-profit organizations providing valuable services to our community.
- CUPF is not in a position to assess the worthiness of non-profit groups. Their responsibility is to lease space to the public and apply fees and guidelines fairly.
- All users are expected to cover minimal costs associated with staff coverage, wear and tear on facilities, supplies and utilities.
- Cost for the program you are referring to is very affordable – \$5 per hour before 6:00 p.m. and \$6.50 after 6:00 p.m.
- Advertising for programs is a responsibility of the individual user groups. Users are expected to adhere to MCPS guidelines regarding the distribution of advertising information. CUPF is not involved in the process.

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9. I am a small-time user (one night per week for pick-up basketball) of a school gym. Having done this now for two years, I have a suggestion for improving the system. Specifically, it would be a significant improvement if we could actually reserve the facilities on-line, rather than the current system where we submit a request on-line and then some weeks later you get a confirmation of which requested days and times you actually were able to get.

The way I would envision it working would be for the preferred users (the school and rec department, I think) to have an initial period where they get to book space. Then when that period is over, each facility would have a calendar with the pre-reserved times blocked out and the available times showing. The community users could then book directly on-line in your system. This type of a system would be better for the user because we would instantly know what space was available and what space we were available to get, at what time. While it might take some technology updates, I would also think it would save your people a lot of time in juggling space requests and communicating with users. Thanks.

--Mark E. Simon

Mark Simon Sports

Answer:

- *Reserving space in schools is more than just looking in the computer and finding available space.*
- *Consideration of parking spaces available, other users in the building, staff coverage for clean up and security, special projects in place by the school system, a school's unique programs, consolidation of use to conserve utility costs, limitations on activities to be held in schools, and many other factors contribute to our inability to offer this level of accessibility to users. Priority guidelines as well as historical use are considerations as well.*
- *All these considerations are made by CUPF staff in responding to the needs of all stakeholders. Technology is a tool but not a replacement for the routine discretion needed to make wise decisions.*
- *Technology has enabled us to move the process to where it is today. Users are able to submit requests, receive confirmation, and download permits online. Schools are provided with timely information as to who is scheduled in schools. This has enhanced our ability to prevent and resolve conflicts.*

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10. Is it still possible to earn rights to a field by maintaining it?

Tim Francis

Tim Francis Soccer

Answer: The adopt-a-field program is still in existence, but it is now administered by the MCPS Department of Facilities Management. They can be reached at (301) 279-3425. No user has exclusive rights to a field but groups adopting fields are entitled to 4 weekdays and 1 weekend day in return for a certain level of maintenance of the field. The other days are permitted by CUPF.

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11. Can you address the concern we soccer coaches have each season that we have to wait so long before we know if we'll get any field at all assigned within reasonable driving distance for our teams? We submit applications early and just wait and wait and may not get a feasible assignment. Secondly, what do you suggest we do when half the soccer fields are managed by a separate organization (Parks and Planning) -- with a separate application process and fee for practice fields? The two-part system almost encourages us to 'hoard' and pay the extra amount to apply for a field in BOTH networks just to assure we get one good field.

Thank you, --

Hilary Weston Joel

Montgomery Soccer, Inc.

**Answer:** *CUPF has received numerous accolades about the turnaround time for processing league requests. We have a system in place that basically assigns all leagues the space they had in previous years. This allows flexibility in their internal strategies for allocation of time.*

*In mid-November 2005, CUPF made a spreadsheet available to MSI administration detailing which fields in the "block area" would be available for spring practice for MSI teams, including days of the week, times, and how many teams could simultaneously use each site. At that time we asked MSI to confirm which sites it would like to permit for practice. We also asked if MSI would continue the procedure of permitting only weekday time for practice while directing teams wishing weekend practice to apply to CUPF directly. CUPF questions regarding weekend practice were not answered by MSI until mid-February 2006. Therefore, anyone who applied directly to CUPF for weekend practice time had to wait until MSI told CUPF that this distribution was acceptable.*

*The first question, detailing procedures for practice in the "block area" and listing which schools were in the "block area" was not finally answered by MSI until February 23. At that time, CUPF was told to "check the MSI website" to see which fields were offered to MSI coaches because those are the fields for which MSI would like permits. Even though CUPF did not receive this notice until February 23, and then had to translate the on-line MSI chart into a format through which permits could be issued, MSI weekday practice permits were completed on March 6 -- a turn-around of only 7 business days to issue all of the practice permits for the entire organization. Also, CUPF could not issue permits for non-block area fields until we knew which fields would be allocated to the organization itself.*

*This spring, all other organizations in the County received their practice permits by the end of January. MSI would have had its practice sites confirmed by the end of January, or very early February at the latest, if CUPF would have received confirmation of the list of available sites we had prepared for the organization in mid-November.*

*We understand the frustration with waiting to learn of your assigned location. Hopefully now that MSI has the experience of two seasons of "block permitting," the organizational turn-around will be much quicker in the future. CUPF is committed to assisting any way we can to simplify this new system of practice permit distribution.*

*We realize the difficulties with 2 different ball field permitting entities. At the last ICB meeting, the CUPF Director was asked meet with MNCPPC to discuss coordination issues and make recommendations to the Board for consideration. Hopefully this action will lead to a more user friendly system in the future.*

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